



Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program

2008/2009 Annual Impact Report

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The 2008 Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant Recipients:

Badgerland Co-op Produce Auction; Buy Fresh, Buy Local Southern Wisconsin, a program of Research, Education, Action and Policy on Food Group (REAP); Chippewa Valley Buy Local Consortium (Producers and Buyers Co-op); Milwaukee Area Restaurant Supported Agriculture; Northwestern Wisconsin Collaborators; Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Groups; Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Producers

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For more information about this publication, please visit:

www.datcp.state.wi.us and search "buy local"

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Dear Friend:

I am pleased to introduce the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin 2008-2009 Annual Impact Report. The state resources presented here provide the critical support needed to build networks and strengthen Wisconsin's local food system.

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program proves that local food can fuel economic growth. In its inaugural year, the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant program generated a nearly \$1 million increase in local food sales.



This report celebrates the program's success by providing an overview of each of the grant recipient projects, offering inspiration for others to collaborate or start similar projects throughout the state.

In addition to the grant program, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin team initiated several new programs to address the broader needs of Wisconsin producers, buyers, and distributors. Workshops, programs, and guides helped producers overcome food safety barriers, open new markets for local food, develop farm-to-school market channels, and increase farm sales and profitability.

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program harnessed the power of the whole state by collaborating with a wide range of experts, including food buyers, distributors, producers, and non-profits, as well as DATCP's sister agencies: the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and the University of Wisconsin. These unique partnerships, along with the hard work of numerous individuals, continue to make the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program a growing success.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod Nilsestuen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rod Nilsestuen

Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

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Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program Overview



Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin is a comprehensive economic development program designed to create models for local food systems by working with farmers and food buyers to develop new markets for Wisconsin food products. The components of this program include:

- ◆ A competitive grant program that funds local food efforts to increase the sale of Wisconsin grown or produced food products.
- ◆ Technical assistance to farmers, communities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations seeking to increase the sale of Wisconsin produced foods.
- ◆ Identifying and addressing hurdles facing regional food system development, such as distribution, food safety, access to markets, state policy, and institutional purchasing.
- ◆ Complementing the work of existing local food programs, including *Something Special from Wisconsin™*, *SavorWisconsin.com*, AmeriCorps Farm to School project, and other efforts across the state.

For more information on the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program, email DATCPBLBW@wi.gov or go to: www.datcp.state.wi.us and search “buy local.”

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant Overview 2008-2009



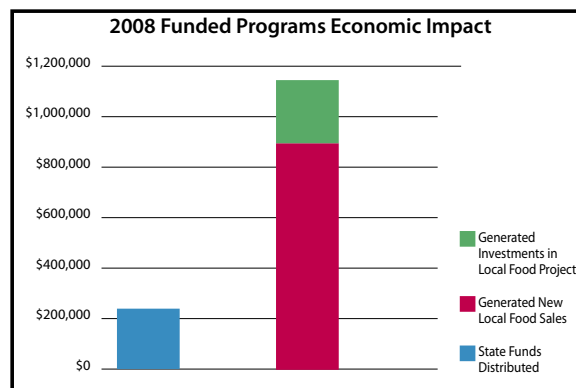
Program Description

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin (BLBW) grant launched as part of Governor Jim Doyle's budget in 2008 as an economic development tool. Designed to help Wisconsin's agricultural and food industries, the grant works to reduce the distribution, processing, and marketing hurdles impeding the expansion of sales of Wisconsin's food products to local purchasers.

Comprehensive Impact to the State

Keeping food dollars in Wisconsin communities helps support local businesses, improves farm income, and creates jobs. With an initial disbursement of \$225,000 in 2008, the BLBW grant has demonstrated success and impact in Wisconsin communities.

The BLBW grant funded seven programs in 2008 that together impacted over 700 Wisconsin producers, benefited over 150 Wisconsin food buyers, and touched 47 Wisconsin counties. The program helped save ten jobs while creating an



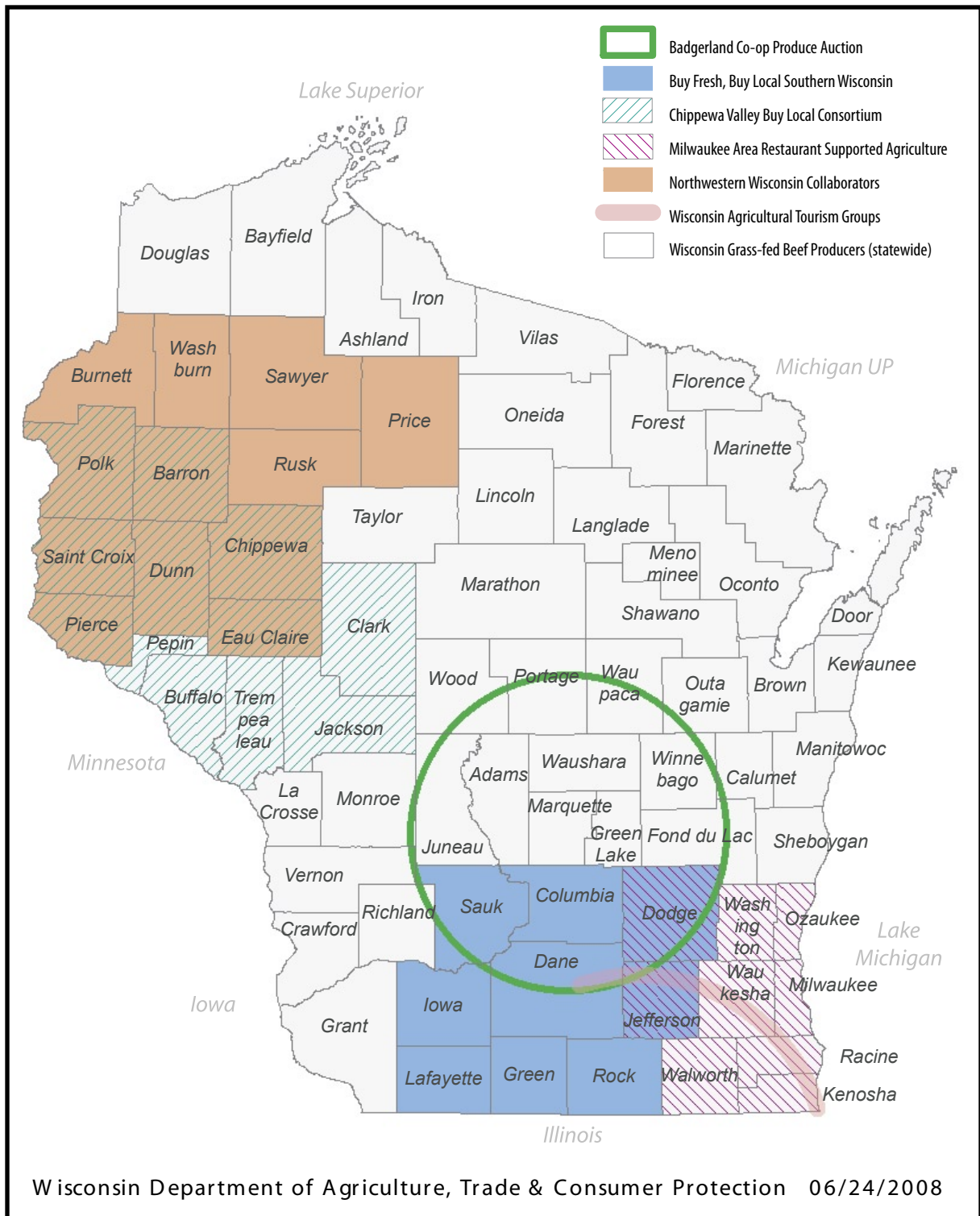
2008 Funded Programs Economic Impact

additional nine and a half new positions. Investment also occurred beyond the grant funds as recipients gathered over \$200,000 in additional dollars to further these programs.

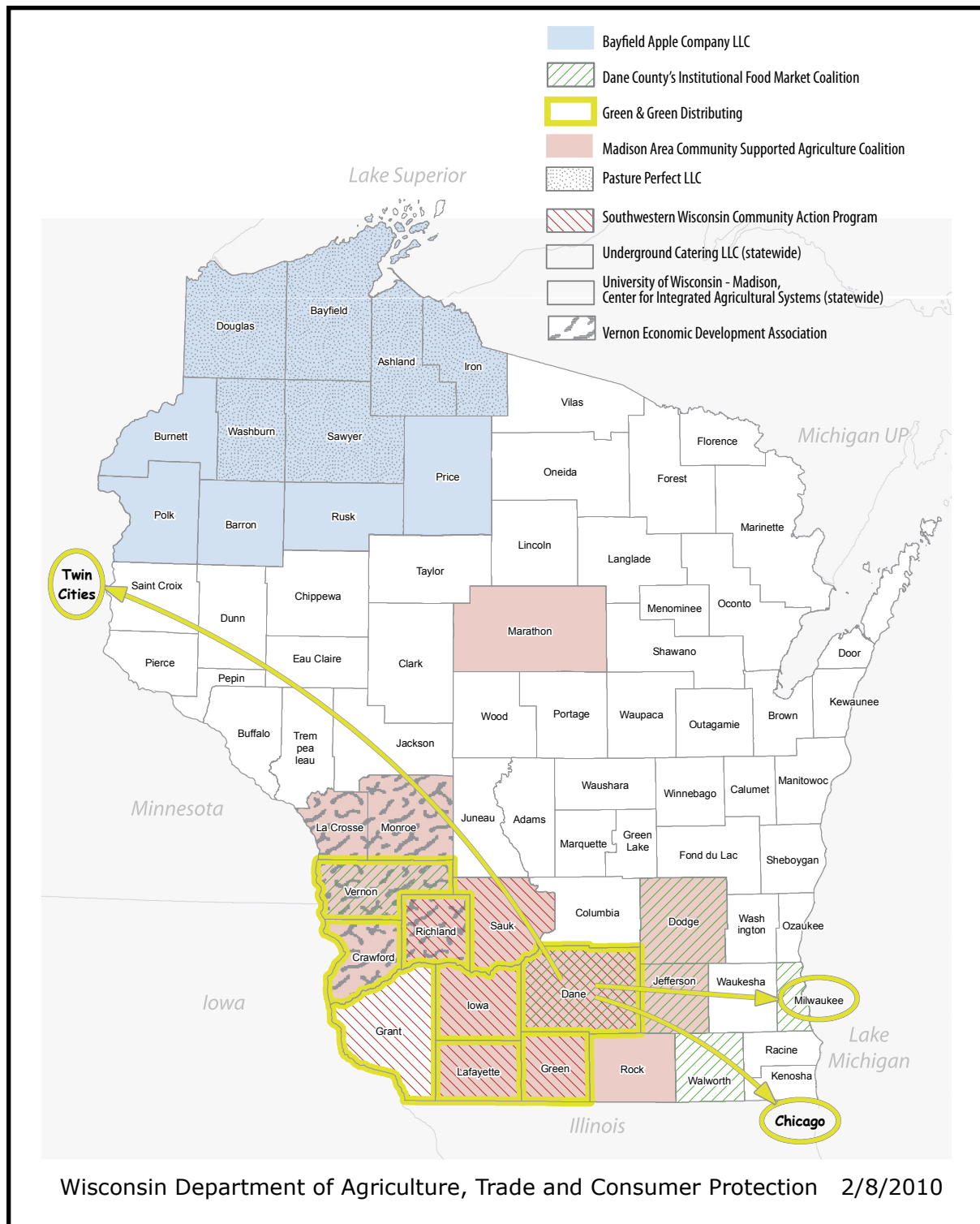
In total, the programs generated over \$950,000 in new sales of Wisconsin food products in the first year alone. These dollars went to Wisconsin farmers, cooperatives, and processing and distribution companies. Furthermore, these dollars circulated in their communities and to all of the suppliers and services these groups depend on. While this shows the great impact of the grant program, it represents only a small fraction of the \$19.2 billion spent annually on food in Wisconsin. Based on these results, it is apparent that increased resources would help shift even more food expenditures to Wisconsin producers while concurrently benefiting local communities.

Year	Funded Programs	Total Funds	Average Grant	Funding Range
2008	7	\$225,000	\$32,143	\$12,155 - \$43,580
2009	9	\$222,700	\$24,744	\$14,000 - \$40,000

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant – 2008 Program Impact Area



Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant – 2009 Program Impact Area



Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant – 2008 Funded Program Details

Badgerland Co-op Produce Auction

Expanded Offerings to Serve Institutional Markets

Project Duration: July 2008 – Dec 2009

Counties Impacted: Wood, Portage, Waupaca, Outagamie, Juneau, Adams, Waushara, Marquette, Winnebago, Green Lake, Fond du Lac, Sauk, Columbia, Dodge, Dane, Iowa, Jefferson

Award Amount: \$46,540

Project Contact: Mary Jean Reading, badgerlandcoop@yahoo.com
www.badgerlandcoop.com



Project Purpose

The Dane County Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM) approached the Badgerland Produce Co-op Auction (BPCA) in an effort to find a way to serve the high volume and unique needs of large-volume institutional food buyers. In response, the BPCA worked to help Dane County institutions, such as government offices,

schools, hospitals, and hotels serve more local foods in their food service operations by expanding the infrastructure and operation capacity of the auction. This effort aimed to eliminate many of the existing barriers for institutions interested in sourcing large quantities of locally grown fruits and vegetables by providing local distribution, pre-pricing options, and by expanding business operations. These institutions prepare meals as a service of their broader organizational goals and do not rely on the sale of these foods as their primary source of income.



Background

Supporting over 200 family farms, BPCA is a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative of small- to mid-scale Wisconsin growers that uses the auction method to achieve fair market prices for wholesale volume sales of locally grown produce. Products ranging from fruits and vegetables to nursery plants are auctioned at least two days each week from April through October. Harvested no more than 24 hours prior to sale, the product is cleaned, graded, and offered in uniform packaging.

Prior to this expansion project, the auction served only customers who participated in the on-site auction and could transport their own purchases. IFM found that the BPCA customer base could be expanded to reach institutional food customers if the auction included competitive pricing and delivery services, increased their liability insurance and met the requirements of numerous other protocols required by large-volume institutional buyers.

Institutional buyers typically procure foods from large distributors who offer set pre-season pricing, on-site delivery, liability insurance, and an array of packaged, prepared foods. As a result, many institutions are no longer equipped to handle and prepare fresh food and their strict food safety and liability requirements become significant hurdles for individual farmers.

Matching the needs of the institutions while addressing the producer constraints has proven to be a long, labor intensive, educational process.



“Our experience has been excellent. We sourced everything from bedding plants to fruit and produce, and in the fall purchased gourds and pumpkins to use in some of our patient activities. I found the prices to be excellent, communication and delivery was very reliable, and the product as high quality.”

Claire Nagel, Director of Purchasing, Mendota Mental Health Institute

Project Outcomes

As a result of the partnership with the IFM, BCPA's institutional customer base has expanded rapidly. Their work generated 74 new market outlets, each representing anywhere from 5,000 to 35,000 meals. The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant funding helped BCPA expand its distribution and refrigeration capacity, and create a “Pre-priced Pilot Program” to help meet this new demand.

To respond to the institutional needs in a way that was beneficial to growers, BCPA worked with a core group of growers and institutional buyers to pilot the pre-price offering. The group identified twelve commonly grown and available produce items for the program that were also commonly used in food service programs. Then BCPA made a non-binding agreement with each institution outlining product volume, grade, and pricing for each of the twelve available items. Pre-pricing reduces pricing volatility for buyers and gives them access to products outside of peak season when products are in limited quantities.

During the auction, BCPA Order/Buyer staff bid on and deliver the products specified in the pre-agreement. Having established the agreement between BPCA and the institution in advance of the season offers the preplanning

requirements needed for the buyers while concurrently helping producers with their production plans and increasing their sales opportunities.

To further streamline the Order/Buyer process, BCPA developed new payment options including invoicing and credit card payments, and a website where buyers could place online orders. Additionally, BCPA developed a plan for meeting the insurance requirements of the institutions and implemented a traceability program.



Finally, leasing a refrigerated truck for delivery and chilling purposes achieved the much-needed increased distribution and refrigeration capacity. Qualified delivery drivers were hired and strategic delivery routes developed to generate efficiencies and good customer service. Having the delivery truck, drivers, and routes gave BCPA the ability to deliver produce directly from individual farms to the institutions. This benefited both growers and buyers as delivery routes were better coordinated to suit the schedules of both. It also reduced product-handling issues, and allowed for a delivered product less than 24 hours from harvest. Prior to the grant program, deliveries were not available. Now trucks deliver products six to seven days a week.

Future Plans

The successful distribution and sale of produce has led institutions to seek additional local product offerings. BCPA is currently exploring producer partners that can help supply institu-

Impact

- ◆ Increased BCPA sales by more than \$170,000
- ◆ Generated new market opportunities for 400 producers
- ◆ Serving 74 institutions
- ◆ Created four new staff and delivery driver jobs
- ◆ Provided resources for a refrigerated truck for institutional customer deliveries



tions with Wisconsin meats, dairy, and value-added processed products. Extension of the product line will help even more producers and increase sales to Wisconsin institutions.

BCPA will continue to enhance the payment process. Lag times between product delivery and receipt of institutional payments can take up to three months, leaving cash-strapped producers and BCPA with short-term cash-flow issues.

Buy Fresh, Buy Local Southern Wisconsin, a Program of Research, Education, Action and Policy on Food Group (REAP)

Created the Critical Link Between Small-scale Farmers and Restaurant Buyers

Project Duration: October 2008 – June 2010

Counties Impacted: Dane, Sauk, Columbia, Dodge, Jefferson, Iowa, Lafayette, Green, Rock

Award Amount: \$43,580

Project Contact: Maria Davis, maria@reapfoodgroup.org

www.reapfoodgroup.org



Project Purpose

With strong consumer interest in locally produced foods, restaurateurs and the farming community are poised to rapidly and significantly increase the amount of local food served at restaurants and food service operations. However, significant challenges prevent this expansion from readily occurring. Playing self-described dual roles as “matchmaker/marriage counselor” and “marketing firm,” REAP’s Buy Fresh, Buy Local program (BFBL) provides the necessary facilitation to translate this rapidly increasing demand into significant increases in local food sales.

Background

The appeal of locally produced foods is strong and growing, especially in the south central section of the state. If the market for locally produced foods is to significantly expand, however, consumers must have access to local foods in settings outside of the home, where nearly 50% of meals are eaten.

Several factors have constrained significant expansion of local foods within the restaurant and institutional market. Restaurant buyers and farmers interested in developing local purchasing associations have received little support to de-



Soup and Bread - “Madison Local’s event - Mermaid Cafe gazpacho made with local veggies, and topped with local ham.” Photo by madisondining.com

velop the necessary relationships. Farmers spend much of their time growing and processing their products, leaving little time or resources left to form the relationships necessary to systematically expand their sales to restaurants. Similarly, chefs indicate a desire to use locally sourced ingredients but are not sure how to find reliable farmer-suppliers that best match their operations. Both parties want to sell and buy locally but are not sure how to begin or who to turn to for help.

Businesses also lack an effective way to capture the value-added benefits of buying locally, another factor limiting the expansion of local food. Some restaurants do promote their local buying, but there has been no systematic outreach program for attracting the public to those

businesses that source locally. Restaurateurs indicate a strong need for educational materials to help educate their patrons about the local foods they use and why they choose local products.

To begin to meet these needs, REAP Food Group launched the Buy Fresh, Buy Local Southern Wisconsin program (BFBL) in the fall of 2006. The program, part of a national Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign, has demonstrated its ability to address food service industry and farmer needs with effective solutions, such as developing a nationally recognized BFBL brand, creating protocols and contract language to engage potential BFBL partners, conducting focus groups with farmers and chefs to determine their greatest needs, and developing relationships between farmers and chefs in a pilot campaign with Madison area restaurants.

With the foundational work completed, BFBL sought to expand both the number of partners and the geographical range of partner establishments throughout the south central Wisconsin region. Funding for this program allowed BFBL to quickly facilitate increased sales to local farmers and to efficiently track progress in developing the restaurant market for local producers.

Project Outcomes

Based on the consumer demand for locally produced foods, more restaurants (especially independent, small-scale operations) seek local food menu offerings as a way to differentiate their business and serve consumer interest. Demand among Madison, WI restaurateurs was quantified through interviews with those that expressed interest in buying locally but currently purchased limited or no local products. Respondents strongly agreed that they had the capacity to secure at least 10% of their food budget from local producers within three years, provided an adequate supply was available. These restaurants average an annual food budget of \$300,000,

resulting in a \$30,000 potential impact on the farming community per restaurant.

Capitalizing on this market opportunity requires a holistic approach that would strategically link consumers, food buyers, and producers. The process requires dedicated, ongoing support, and the ability to problem solve in an entrepreneurial manner. As a mediator and marketer, REAP brought all three groups together to increase local food sales.

One-on-One Consulting

Integral to the program's success is the dedicated staff support necessary for bringing buyers and sellers together and educating both on market potential. Conventional, global food systems receive significant support from distributors who often provide marketing, transportation, and billing support for producers, while concurrently offering a simplified ordering and delivery system for buyers. BFBL services aimed to replicate this broker relationship, minus the transportation and large budgets.

As BFBL members, restaurants benefit from one-on-one consulting services. Most commonly, BFBL staff help restaurant buyers locate local product by connecting them with local producers and often help locate distribution options for transporting this product. In addition, BFBL member restaurateurs benefit from in-store marketing programs that broadcast their use of local products to consumers. Finally, REAP's broad-reaching communication tools such as the *Farm Fresh Atlas*, BFBL online listing, and event programming help increase each restaurant's marketing exposure. It also provides an avenue for communicating to other potential local farmer suppliers.

BFBL's producer members also benefit from one-on-one consulting. Years of experience have provided BFBL staff with a wealth of

knowledge about buyer needs, including safe product handling, packaging and delivery requirements, and potential sales demand. This knowledge allows producer members to offer products and services that best meet the needs of their potential buyers.

BFBL outreach and support goes beyond existing membership. In an effort to continually increase market availability of local food, BFBL staff regularly meet with prospective producers and buyers, typically more than ten producers per year. During the grant period alone, more than 80 invitation packets were distributed to potential members.

Marketing & Education

Marketing and educational programs help ensure that demand for local food continues to grow. But busy running their restaurants, restaurateurs often have little time to develop customized marketing programs for their business. Yet without a marketing story, consumers are often unaware of the restaurant's commitment to local foods and, therefore, the restaurant's buying choices add little value.

To decrease the strain on restaurant owners and help to increase local food sales, BFBL program managers created promotional programs to support the restaurant and farmers, and to share the general benefits of buying locally. Two core programs were implemented during the course of the grant period.

To create awareness of local products in store, a "Farmer Chef Collecting Card" program was launched. Similar to baseball trading cards, each Farmer Chef Collecting card featured a color photo of a farmer with statistics and quick facts on the back. BFBL restaurant members each received cards featuring information about their farm suppliers, which were prominently featured in the restaurant to increase consumer knowledge. While survey results are forthcom-

ing, initial response from both restaurant owners and consumers has been very positive.

In support of its newest restaurant members, BFBL also launched a promotion called "Local Harvest: A Taste of the Town." Held in both July and October 2009, participating restaurants created unique dishes using local foods to show diners how they incorporate products from local producers into their menus. "Many of our participating restaurants consider Local Harvest their favorite event because they have the opportunity to be creative with their menu and share that with their diners," says Buy Fresh, Buy Local program coordinator Maria Davis. In turn, the success of Local Harvest demonstrates to chefs how strong the demand is for fresh, locally grown foods. The October event proved to be the most successful event in BFBL history with all participating chefs reporting increased sales during the three-day event.

Future Plans

As the interest in local foods continues to expand, so will BFBL memberships. BFBL staff will continue to use their expertise to expand BFBL memberships to restaurants beyond the Madison market. To decrease strain on both buyers and producers, BFBL will continue to seek distribution partners that can create more efficient transportation options for farmers.

Impact

- ◆ Increased sales: \$58,455
- ◆ 45 BFBL farmers received \$1.19 million in 2008 sales
- ◆ 38 BFBL restaurants, health care providers, and grocery store buyers have increased local food product purchases by \$52,000 from July-December 2008

Chippewa Valley Buy Local Consortium

Launched Producers and Buyers Co-op

Project Duration: July 2008 – November 2009

Counties Impacted: Polk, Barron, St. Croix, Dunn, Chippewa, Pierce, Pepin, Eau Claire, Clark, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson

Award Amount: \$41,660

Project Contact: Mary C. Anderson, mary.anderson@rcdnet.net
www.producersandbuyers.com

Project Purpose

Funding from the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant helped create the Chippewa Valley Producers and Buyers Co-op, which brought together farms and institutions seeking to sell and purchase food locally. Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, is a critical founding partner in the project, having pledged to spend 10% of their food budget on local products. Sacred Heart's support provided a critical market opportunity for the Co-op, reducing farmers' marketing and production risks.

Background

River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council (River Country) was well positioned to be a leader in this effort. Through their work with the Mid-West Value Added Conference and the Managed Intensive Grazing Program, River Country has worked with value-added farmers for ten years. Farmers commonly came to them seeking help in expanding sales beyond direct markets, but despite several attempts to address these requests, River Country found it challenging to locate adequate local markets for these producers.

This hurdle was immediately overcome when River Country's NRCS Coordinator, Pam Herdrich, met Rick Beckler, Director of Hospitality Services for Sacred Heart Hospital, at the 10th



Annual Mid-West Value Added Conference. Beckler expressed his strong desire to purchase local foods for the hospital's food service operation but outlined the obstacles he currently faced in sourcing local product.

Shortly thereafter, Sacred Heart Hospital formally requested River Country's assistance in creating an entity that would work with local farmers to fill his institution's food orders. At a River Country board meeting in 2008, Beckler committed to spending 10% of the hospital's nearly \$2 million food budget on local food. This strong commitment to local purchasing was met with unanimous support by the River Country board, at which point the group dedicated significant staff time to help move the effort forward. Sacred Heart's commitment provided the critical demand that had been missing for the last ten years.

In February 2008, Sacred Heart, River Country, and a number of producers met to explore the possibility of buying and selling local products. The group agreed that some sort of consortium must be created to coordinate product

orders and deliveries. This consortium would also need to provide the leadership for the effort and initiate certain key elements, including defining product specifications and quality standards, recruiting and training both farmers and institutions, and acting as an arbiter between the institutions and the farmers in disputes over product quality, specifications, and timing of delivery.

Participants agreed to help develop the structure of the consortium and to recruit additional farms to join the group. The team was eager to quickly launch the effort to meet the group's aggressive goal of moving \$85,000 of product through the pilot consortium by July 1, 2009.

Project Outcomes

With a committed group and an identified market, the team moved rapidly to formalize their partnership in March 2009. Margaret Bau, USDA-Rural Development Cooperative Specialist, helped the group decide on a cooperative

business structure with the name "Producers & Buyers Co-op" (PBC). Sacred Heart Hospital's communications department staff then worked with them to develop a logo.

The PBC developed bylaws and elected an interim board of directors. They established a unique structure allowing membership in the cooperative from Chippewa Valley area businesses along the entire food chain: producers, processors, distributors, and institutional buyers.

Local Food Sales

With Sacred Heart Hospital's local food purchasing commitment, and the hospital's active participation in the pilot program, the project had a great advantage in meeting its sales goal. The PBC reached the \$85,000 sales goal at the end of December 2008 through the sale of meat and dairy products to Sacred Heart Hospital, more than six months ahead of schedule. By March 2009, PBC had sold 11,000 pounds of beef, 2,400 pounds of pork, and 12,000 pounds of chicken for a total of \$100,000. Since then, PBC has increased its sales by adding more value-added products. By the end of the grant program, the hospital had purchased nearly \$125,000 of local food through the cooperative.

Production, Processing & Staffing

Job creation resulting from the increased sales and production of local food for institutional buyers could be measured throughout the entire food chain. Several producers have increased production, and processors have expanded their businesses, especially for beef and poultry. The cooperative has also created a business plan that identifies the need for three part-time positions, double the current staff support. Over time, as the cooperative expands its institutional buyers, the PBC will need to expand its two part-time staff into a full-time management and sales position.



Thanks to the
Co-op, our patients, cafeteria
patrons, and Meals-on-Wheels customers enjoy
fresh local food products.

Impact

- ◆ Formalized the cooperative buying group to serve over 20 farms
- ◆ Generated over \$125,000 in local food sales
- ◆ Helped launch local distribution business, which became the sole distributor for the Co-op
- ◆ Increased production for seven meat processing plants

Stable Market Expansion for Producers

After securing insurance for the Co-op's board and operations, the PBC began the process of formally soliciting and reviewing membership applications in June 2009 for producers, processors, delivery drivers, and institutions that had been part of the pilot project. The Co-op has enrolled twelve producer members, two buyer members, and three processor members, with additional producer memberships pending. The PBC has been working on increasing its product line by meeting with the Sacred Heart Hospital chef as well as its processors to include cuts of beef, pork, and specialty products like breakfast sausage or boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Expansion of the product line will result in an increase in specialized producer members.

The Co-op has a membership policy that seeks to provide a stable market by limiting the number of producer members to meet current sales. Existing members also have the opportunity to expand their business as sales increase before the Co-op takes on new members. Ideally, the Co-op will have standing orders for the majority of its products, as it does now.

Long-term Success

One critical element in creating a successful food chain that links producers with a new institutional market is commitment by all seg-

ments of the food chain. Producers must learn how institutions are accustomed to ordering and receiving their food, which is often very different from working with individuals or selling at a farmers' market. Institutional buyers, accustomed to ordering one day and receiving product the next, also need to understand the planning needed to produce products. Processors can play a large part in fostering these understandings by working with producers to determine the proper live weight of poultry to create the small portion size required by a hospital, or to identify ways to process value-added products like hamburger patties or small breakfast sausage links that meet the institution's specifications. Additionally, a safe and reliable transportation system must be developed, and packaging and labeling must be designed to meet the needs of the institution.

Future Plans

Through the outreach efforts of Sacred Heart Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls completed an application for membership and wrote a letter of support for the PBC. Dave Fish, CEO of the hospital, committed to purchasing 5% of the hospital's \$350,000 annual food budget through the Co-op. The Co-op is working with St. Joseph's to identify products the hospital can source and purchase from the Co-op's product line, which will increase demand for existing producer members' products and potentially identify an opportunity to bring in new members to fill these orders.

The Co-op hired a part-time local foods coordinator to replace two of the River Country RC&D staff that assisted with the initial creation of the project. The new team member will focus on reaching out to additional institutions and will take over the coordination of product sales. The staff member will help seek funding to further expand the Co-op.

Milwaukee Area Restaurant Supported Agriculture

Created Infrastructure and Relationships to bring Local Food from Farm to Restaurant

Project Duration: June 2008 – May 2010

Counties Impacted: Dodge, Washington, Ozaukee, Jefferson, Waukesha, Milwaukee, Walworth, Racine, and Kenosha

Award Amount: \$25,502

Project Contact: David Swanson, daveswanson@braiselocalfood.com

www.braiselocalfood.com

Project Purpose

The Milwaukee Area Restaurant Supported Agriculture (RSA) launched in 2008 to help bring Wisconsin local farm products to Milwaukee area chefs. The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant provided the necessary funding to build the staffing and marketing support needed to

increase sales for 40 Wisconsin producers to a dozen Milwaukee area restaurants. By connecting farmers and chefs, the RSA program shifted food-purchasing dollars away from large purveyors, who typically source product out-of-state, to Wisconsin farmers.

Background

Passionate about cooking and local foods, project leader David Swanson first explored the idea of launching a restaurant centered on local foods. He quickly learned that no easy solution for sourcing product existed, thus requiring a tremendous amount of time on the part of the restaurant to locate product, arrange for delivery, and ensure ample supply.

Swanson also met with numerous smaller scale Milwaukee area farmers. He learned that many farmers sought new markets but found it challenging to expand either due to time or land constraints.

Most Milwaukee area farmers tend to be smaller in size, and rely on direct sales, such as farmers' markets and individual Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), for their primary revenue sources. Due to the high labor demands of the CSA method of farming, these farmers have reached maximum capacity and cannot afford to hire the additional labor needed to serve an



Chef Swanson applies the finishing touches to a dish using fresh produce from the field behind him.

“The Milwaukee Area Restaurant Supported Agriculture program would not have launched without the [Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin] grant.”

Chef David Swanson



A row of swiss chard is ready for harvest and swift delivery to a local chef.

expanded direct sales market. Not to mention the fact that no one farm, despite a wide variety of offerings, could meet the daily needs of even one chef. In addition, not all farmers have a need for an ongoing restaurant relationship, but could benefit from selling surplus, season end, or #2 (lower quality or slightly blemished) products.

From his research, Swanson concluded that a Milwaukee Area Restaurant Supported Agriculture model offered the most cost-effective alternative for farmers to expand into new markets.

Project Outcomes

Seeing the great needs of Milwaukee area farms and the strong interest in local sourcing from Milwaukee restaurateurs, the RSA program launched in 2008. This model offers some of the benefits of efficiency often gained serving the wholesale market while still retaining the individual farm name and image to restaurant buyers.

Farm-to-Chef Liaison

The program's success can be attributed to the

leadership of David Swanson. His passion for local foods, compassion for farmers, and experience as a chef brings the balance necessary for bringing high-quality products to chefs at a fair price for both parties. Swanson works as a liaison seeking long-term partnerships between buyers and sellers.

Through his work, Swanson has formed close relationships with 40 Milwaukee area growers. He's tasted their products, learned their growing practices and become familiar with the opportunities and challenges facing each grower. This knowledge guided Swanson as he sought partnerships for them with Milwaukee restaurants.

In the winter months prior to the planting season, Swanson met with restaurant buyers to assess their product needs and their ability to source locally. Having an intimate relationship with his grower suppliers, Swanson could quickly match grower products with restaurant needs. Based on the restaurant orders, he assessed each grower's strength, capacity, and interest in expansion. He then met with each grower individually to place these orders in advance of the season.

Having product orders secured in advance improves production planning for farmers. The



upfront ordering process also saves farmers time by eliminating the need for repeat order management. Farmers then manage their own harvesting and arrange their own deliveries to the restaurant. Delivering directly to restaurant customers allows the farms to market their farm name to the restaurant and provides the forum for direct customer feedback. Unlike a traditional CSA, product can be packaged on a larger scale, lowering packaging, labor, and marketing costs.

Product Processing & Storage Needs

Early on, Swanson recognized that the restaurants' need for cost-effective food options year round and the farmers' need to sell surplus and slightly blemished product could be a good match. Using BLBW grant funds, the RSA built a small cooler to store longer-lasting products, such as root vegetables, to be used well after harvest. In addition, the cooler allowed products of a lesser quality to be minimally processed for use as ingredients. A bruised strawberry that would otherwise go to compost, for example, could be washed, cut, and frozen for later use in a dessert or sauce.

The increased storage capacity offered great benefits to both producer and chef. It provided additional income to farmers by creating a market for blemished products and extended the season for storage products. For chefs, the new

Impact

- ◆ Now marketing more than 90 unique products from 40 farms to 12 buyers
- ◆ Generated nearly \$110,000 in new sales of Wisconsin farm products
- ◆ Created insulated storage cooler to extend the season for local food availability and increase storage capacity for local producers



Chef Swanson takes the direct route, connecting Wisconsin farmers with diners in a pristine farm-to-plate meal.

infrastructure created greater and more cost effective product offerings throughout the year.

Payments

Core to the program's success is the payment structure to farmers. Unlike a traditional wholesale relationship, the RSA producers receive payment for their product upfront. Like a direct-to-consumer CSA, the restaurant customers pay farmers in advance for the season's order. This payment structure improves the farmer's pre-season cash flow and reduces the need for short-term loans and interest charges.

Future Plans

The cooler space established through the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant funding proved so successful that the RSA outgrew the space almost immediately. To accommodate this greater demand, the RSA plans to move to a 2,000-square-foot storage facility in the Milwaukee suburb of Bayview. This expansion will also help the organization increase sales to both existing and new restaurant customers.

Northwestern Wisconsin Collaborators

Launched Efforts to Improve Education and Distribution throughout the Region

Project Duration: June 2008 - May 2010

Counties Impacted: Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Polk, Barron, Rusk, Price, St. Croix, Pierce, Dunn, Chippewa, Eau Claire

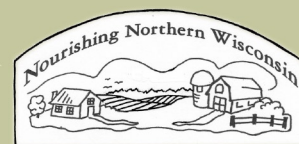
Award Amount: \$26,583

Project Contacts:

Northwestern Wisconsin Regional Food Network – Tracey Mofle, tracey.mofle@uwc.edu
<http://wisconsinlocalfood.wetpaint.com/page/Local+and+Regional++Local+Food+Initiatives>

Price Direct – Jane Hansen, jane.hansen@ces.uwex.edu
www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/price/ag/PriceDirect.html

Six Rivers Cooperative – Maurice Smith, maurice@chibardun.net



Project Purpose

Grant funding for this program provided the resources needed to support efforts to educate buyers and help northwestern Wisconsin farmers access new markets. The project directly addressed two critical areas of need: low consumer awareness about local food, and limited local distribution options. First, through collaborative regional outreach efforts, the team increased consumer awareness of the availability and benefits of local foods. Second, the grant provided support for building a cost- and time-efficient business model to aggregate, package, distribute, and market local food products.

Background

Significant expansion of the local foods sector in northwestern Wisconsin requires that producers have access to efficient ways to market and distribute their products. In some cases, a local food system can use parts of the conventional food network, but this is not the case in northwestern Wisconsin, where unique local challenges necessitate new methods that will give local producers the competitive advantage.

Located in a largely rural area, local producers



Chef Susan Birkey demonstrated a number of savory dishes using fresh, local foods at the 2009 Chef at the Market event held at Phillips, Wisconsin.

in northwestern Wisconsin do not generally have access to established (and more conventional) networks of distribution and marketing. Producers are often limited to direct sales methods, such as farmers' markets and roadside stands, which offer higher prices but more limited sales potential.

Currently, few opportunities exist for small and mid-scale northwestern Wisconsin producers to efficiently and profitably distribute their products to wholesale markets while still promoting their farm name to the customer. Without a strong distribution option, these producers are forced to travel long distances to deliver their product to cities with larger population bases.



These grilled vegetables kabobs were prepared by Chef Susan Birkey and the ingredients were provided by local producers for an appreciative crowd in Phillips, Wisconsin.

Many consumers in this region are of limited means. Of the twelve counties impacted by this program, three are among the ten poorest Wisconsin counties (based on 2008 median household incomes). Therefore, producers cannot always rely on markets close to home for revenue, requiring them to seek larger markets and greater market potential. These complexities make the creation of strong partnerships that work on many levels critical to creating a viable local food system in this region.

Project Outcomes

The team implemented a two-pronged approach to collectively address the challenges facing northwestern Wisconsin's producers. First, the Northwest Wisconsin Regional Food Network and Price Direct partnered to increase consumer awareness and demand for local products through communication events and activities. Second, Six Rivers Co-op expanded its distribution efforts, providing greater consumer access to local foods while

The Northwest Wisconsin Regional Food Network is a grassroots group of local farmers, volunteers, and agency staff working together to create a regional food system that connects consumers back to the land, and provides locally produced fresh and nutritious foods to all community segments, while preserving the environment and sustaining the local economy for years to come.

Price Direct promotes direct marketing of locally grown foods throughout Price County. Administered by Price County UW Extension since 2005, the effort coordinates a variety of educational and promotional activities that increases the sale of local foods.

Six Rivers Cooperative is a farmer-owned distribution business that delivers organic and naturally raised products to wholesale customers in northwestern Wisconsin and Minnesota's Twin Cities.

concurrently creating new, profitable markets for northwestern Wisconsin producers. *(See side bar above for organization descriptions)*

Communication Activities

Recognizing the need to foster new markets for area producers, Price Direct (PD) and the Northwest Wisconsin Regional Food Network (NWRFN), along with many other organizations, held programs and events to educate consumers on how and where to buy locally produced foods.

The groups began a regional "Chef at the Market" event featuring local farmers at more than five northwestern Wisconsin farmers' markets. At each location, a prominent local chef pre-



The crowd at the Chef at the Market! event held in August 2009 enjoyed sampling a wide variety of local foods prepared by a professional chef.

pared dishes using seasonal, local foods for market customers. The effort showed widespread impact by increasing consumer awareness about cooking with local, seasonal ingredients; generating more traffic at the market itself; resulting in increased sales for market vendors; and generating greater awareness of the participating chefs' businesses.

Also, in an effort to more comfortably connect local farmers with local buyers, the team launched the "North Central Wisconsin Farm-to-Fork Event." Held in Price County in April 2009, the event connected eight buying businesses and fifteen producers. Buyers and sellers of local food had the opportunity to meet and develop a relationship, ultimately leading to increases in local food sales.

Through this work, the team more fully realized the importance of community-based educational work. Their success relied heavily upon engaging a host of partners, including farmers, local food advocates, and volunteers, to implement meaningful projects. These events have educated foodservice buyers, many of whom have committed to purchasing local food products for the upcoming season.

Distribution Infrastructure

Northwestern Wisconsin farmers launched the Six Rivers Cooperative in 2008 to find more

efficient and profitable distribution options for their products. Recognizing that producers have little time and may not wish to market or distribute products themselves, the group developed the Co-op as a way to sell and market local products for producers. The Co-op also made it easier for buyers by providing a single point of contact and one invoice.

In its infancy, the group struggled to find the capital they needed to expand. Staffing constraints and a lack of an appropriate delivery vehicle also hindered growth. The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant made it possible for the Six Rivers Co-op to purchase a used Dodge Sprinter van and to customize it for refrigerated deliveries, allowing for further testing of their distribution model. During the grant period, the Six Rivers Co-op expanded their customer base to more than 25 buyers, resulting in more than \$75,000 in increased sales.

Future Plans

Communication efforts will continue in 2010. The 2009 "Chef at the Market" events proved so successful that participants in all cities have expressed interest in expanding the promotion in 2010.

Buyer interest in Six River Cooperative deliveries continues to grow. The group will continue to seek market expansion, but priority will be placed on generating distribution efficiencies that will help make existing sales more profitable for producers.

Impact

- ◆ Expanded markets for 14 producers.
- ◆ Generated more than \$80,000 in new local food sales
- ◆ Benefiting more than 30 food buyers
- ◆ Expanded distribution infrastructure with the addition of the refrigerated truck

Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Groups

Implemented the Autumn Harvest Trail to Educate Wisconsin Travelers

Project Duration: July – November 2008

Counties Impacted: Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee, Waukesha, Jefferson, and Dane

Award Amount: \$12,155

Project Contact: Anna Maenner, acmnc@verizon.net

www.waga.org/AHT/autumn_harvest_trail.htm



Project Purpose

The Autumn Harvest Trail project created a food and culture trail for promoting southeastern and southcentral Wisconsin food producers and agricultural tourism destinations. This marketing tool increased the sale and consumption of locally grown foods by bringing consumers in direct contact with Wisconsin producers and local food retailers. Visitors gained an increased awareness of how food is produced while concurrently creating a “food experience” that will bring them back to these destinations again and again.

Background

With the country’s economic challenges, high gas prices, and strong consumer interest in local foods, agricultural destinations are poised to capture new visitors and to experience strong growth. So much so that in 2008, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism called agricultural tourism a top trend and featured agricultural destinations in its regional advertising campaign.

While most agri-tourism destinations want more visitors, owners are time pressed and have very limited budgets to market their farm and farm products. Agri-tourism producers run complex businesses that often requires focusing on multiple sales outlets. Having visitors come to the farm for activities such as hayrides, animal petting, cider pressing, and apple picking creates safety and logistical challenges that differ from those selling solely off farm.

At the same time, having visitors come to the farm offers the chance to make a long-lasting favorable impression. Consumers can have hands-on experiences that increase their awareness of local foods and how those foods are produced.

The timing of an agri-tourism project is also critical. Fall is typically considered a fringe, or non-peak, travel time for Wisconsin. Yet for farms, fall is also a time of agricultural abundance as farm harvesting is at its peak. The Autumn Harvest Trail sought to help increase visitor rates during these slower travel times through a unique promotional program to link non-competing food and agricultural businesses in the southeastern Wisconsin region.

Project Outcomes

The Autumn Harvest Trail first created a unique, collaborative marketing program to help producers market their farms as an agricultural tourism destination during their peak harvest season.



Busy Barns Adventure Farms, Fort Atkinson, offered a wide variety of fall produce on the trail stop.



AEppelTreow Winery, Burlington, offered a complete production tour of their winery.

Bundling producers together decreased costs for producers while helping travelers make the most out of their visit to the southeastern and south-central Wisconsin region.

Timing

Local foods are plentiful in the autumn in Wisconsin. While not often considered a peak time for Wisconsin travel, it is a time when most big vacations are over, children are back in school, and families start cooking meals and eating together again. Fall offers the perfect time to reconnect people to foods grown in their own and nearby communities. The trail was launched and marketed from September through November 2008 to capture this market and to help boost sales for producer participants.

Producer Participants

Producer participants were carefully selected and standards developed to ensure that visitors to all trail destinations had a positive experience. Invitations were extended to southeastern Wisconsin members of the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association, the Wisconsin Fresh Market Vegetable Growers Association, and the Wisconsin Apple Growers Association.

According to Anna Maenner, the program's director, producers were evaluated and selected based on "signage, parking, neat and tidy surroundings, restrooms, drinking water accessibility, local foods offered for sale, local crafts/art for sale, entertainment or activities available, information on other community places to visit, and a place to eat on-site or nearby that offers local foods." Participants ranged from orchards and petting zoos to u-pick pumpkins and wineries. The full participant list is available on the Autumn Harvest Trail website.

This producer partnership created a spirit of collaboration among the participants, and provided a forum for producers to discuss best practices and the risks and opportunities for agri-tourism businesses. Additionally, the program offered marketing support that resulted in increased sales. Together, the 18 partner participants generated over \$401,928 in sales, far exceeding the \$50,500 goal. The marketing efforts and cohesive program brought over 1,200 new visitors to participating destinations.

"Through the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant, a little bit of incentive went a long way in showing the impact to producers of agri-tourism. Many of our destinations were surprised by the interest on the part of consumers to learn where their food comes from. People really do want to eat local!"

Anna Maenner, Wisconsin Apple Growers Association

Marketing

Much of the program's success can be attributed to the broader marketing efforts that the program provided. The team first created a fall-like

logo to promote the trail collectively, which appeared on brochures. Five thousand brochures were distributed via requests through the Internet, a toll free number, and at Wisconsin Welcome Centers and Autumn Harvest Trail destinations.

Impact

- ◆ Generated over \$400,000 in increased sales to 18 Wisconsin producers
- ◆ Brought over 1,200 new travelers to a Wisconsin agri-tourism destination
- ◆ Collaborative marketing increased exposure for all producer participants and drew more tourists to southeastern Wisconsin

Other marketing tools included a fifteen-second radio commercial, press releases, and print ads to increase awareness about the trail and to drive people to the newly created website. The 18-page website featured the trail as a whole and offered individual pages for each trail destination. During the promotion, the website received nearly 2,500 page views with 1,352 unique viewers.

Evaluation

The group developed an evaluation tool to gauge the program's success and to help capture data for future program enhancements. To track visitors, a drawing was held at each destination. Entry slips requested entrant name and contact information, and asked whether they had previously visited that destination. Each destination offered a prize to an entrant who visited that farm. All drawing slips were then collected to compete for the grand prize: a weekend vacation at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

The raffle resulted in 4,526 entries. Over a

quarter of the entrants (28%; 1,246 individuals) indicated that this was their first visit to this destination, proving that the project brought incremental business to each destination.

Consumer Experience

The Autumn Harvest Trail gave consumers a convenient way to experience Wisconsin's harvest foods. The promotion connected a diverse group of local food businesses and allowed travelers to be guided along a path connecting the major metropolitan areas in Wisconsin and nearby states. By following main travel corridors, the trail allowed consumers to experience the local food and culture of each community and the region as a whole. The trail was also structured so that visitors could make a daylong or weekend experience by visiting multiple attractions along the trail, thus increasing the overall impact to the participants and to the state.

Future Plans

The success of the program has led the team to plan to expand and further market the trail in 2010. To further increase sales, emphasis will be placed on developing promotional efforts that foster greater collaboration and cross promotion between trail participants. Initial discussions are underway to explore possibilities for expanding the trail to include additional site participants.



Teaching youth about all aspects of Wisconsin agriculture will lead to more informed buyers in the future.

Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Producers

Developed Grass-fed Beef Cooperative and Grass-fed Beef Brand

Project Duration: July, 2008 – June, 2009

Counties Impacted: Statewide

Award Amount: \$28,980

Project Contacts: Lanice Szomi, Lanice.szomi@wi.usda.gov

Bob Brandt, robertbrandt@wi.usda.gov

www.wisconsingrassfed.coop/beef



Project Purpose

The challenge of efficiently meeting consumer demand for local, sustainably raised meats prompted five Wisconsin beef producers to explore a formal partnership to address these issues. With leadership from Pri-Ru-Ta Resource Conservation and Development Council, these producers developed a statewide cooperative to allow individual grass-fed beef producers to pool their beef, organize processing, and develop a dependable and consistent year-round product supply. By organizing at the state level, the cooperative created scale efficiencies that help overcome some of the logistical hurdles often encountered by individual producers.

Background

Consumers are more interested in locally produced grass-fed beef than ever before, yet many struggle to find this beef outside farmers' markets or direct from the farm. Even with growing inter-

est in carrying Wisconsin grass-fed beef at restaurants and specialty grocery stores, few farmers are large enough to supply the needs of even a single store or restaurant on a weekly basis.



Rod Ofte of Coon Valley, Wisconsin shown here with his herd of beef became the first employee of the co-op. As sales manager he led sales with 100 head in the first year!

Impact

- ◆ Created 37-member Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative
- ◆ Developed Co-op protocols to standardize product, optimize production
- ◆ Created Wisconsin Meadows Brand
- ◆ Hired sales and production staff
- ◆ Developed seven new wholesale relationships

Currently, for grass-fed beef to reach local markets, every farmer must arrange for the processing, packaging, storage, and distribution of their product on their own. Success at introducing and keeping local products in these retail locations depends strongly on the initiative and resources of each individual, time-pressed farmer. As a result, locally grown beef varies widely in quantity, quality, and availability. Product offerings are often limited to less processed cuts such as a half or quarter carcasses, sizes unfamiliar to many wholesale and individual purchasers.

Project Outcomes

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant enabled the recipients to formally develop the Wisconsin Grass-Fed Beef Cooperative to more efficiently meet consumer demand for grass-fed beef. The Cooperative established production protocols, created a grass-fed beef brand, hired sales and production staff, and began selling premium priced grass-fed beef products to new Wisconsin markets. Thirty-seven grass-fed beef producers have become paying members of the Cooperative, representing nearly 2,000 head of cattle with the capacity to achieve nearly \$14 million dollars in annual sales.

The Cooperative began in 2008 when more than 40 Wisconsin beef producers met to discuss how to reduce the marketing, processing, and distribution hurdles facing the expansion of locally produced grass-fed beef in Wisconsin. The group agreed that some form of organiza-



The Angus steer on the left became the first one sold by the newly formed Co-op. He was raised on Driftless Dells farm in the Kickapoo Valley and was sold to Harvest Restaurant in Madison, Wisconsin.

tion would be essential to meet market needs. Participants also recognized the importance of developing a business plan and creating an enduring organization for local production, processing, and distribution.

Market Research

Through the initial collaboration, the group identified a strong unmet need for Wisconsin grass-fed beef from wholesalers. Buyer interviews and store visits uncovered strong retailer interest in local beef, as some were currently selling grass-fed beef from other states. Interviews also indicated that buyers seek products produced in close proximity to the retail location, production standards and inspections, consistent quality, reliable supply, and product labeling and packaging.

Cooperative Development

To meet these needs, the group formalized their partnership by establishing the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative on June 28, 2008. Through the cooperative development process, the team developed production protocols allowing producers to create not only a more uniform product but also the potential to generate greater production efficiencies. This process proved challenging and time consuming, but was critical to success, as the outcome would impact all current and future co-op producers.

The formalized cooperative and corresponding protocols provided the necessary foundation for further growing the Cooperative and grass-fed beef sales. The group quickly realized that additional resources were desperately needed to help identify processing and packaging synergies, to create optimal product offerings, and to secure new wholesale markets. As such, the Cooperative hired a sales manager and a production manager, and launched the Wisconsin Meadows brand

to sell their product under. A Co-op member helped secure and develop the Co-op's websites at www.wisconsingrassfed.coop, www.wisconsinmeadows.com and www.wisconsingrassfed.com.

Sales

In the first half of 2009, the Cooperative processed 35 grass-fed beef cattle, representing nearly \$70,000 in Wisconsin Meadows' grass-fed beef sales to seven new wholesale customers. This product offered greater profitability for producers as it sold at a 10-20% higher price than that sold through the conventional market. As part of a cull cow program, the Co-op also launched a hamburger product, which helped members optimize herd size, provide better ongoing supply, and deliver a higher sale price to the producer.

It is clear that Wisconsin's grass-fed producers seek new and more sustainable markets for their products. The Co-op received more than 300 requests for membership packets from producers with a wide range of backgrounds including current grass-fed beef producers, those wishing to start a grass-fed beef operation, and conventional producers looking to switch to grass-fed. Sales are expected to grow as the Co-op continues to build its organizational infrastructure and membership base.



Co-op members staff tradeshow booths throughout the year. All graphics were created by one of the charter members.

Future Plans

Although growth is expected to continue, further analysis is required. The Co-op plans to seek assistance in developing a formal business plan that will provide a more thorough market assessment, financial analysis, and create a tool for seeking funds for the Co-op's expansion.

In an effort to meet demand in Wisconsin markets and develop Minneapolis and Chicago markets, the group intends to build infrastructure in three regional hubs. Keeping resources regionalized reduces transportation costs and strengthens local buyer relationships while offering resource efficiencies.

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant – 2009 Funded Program Overviews



Bayfield Apple Company LLC

Strengthening the Apple Industry in Wisconsin

Project Duration: January 2010 – May 2011

Counties Impacted: Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland, Iron, Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Price, Polk, Barron, Rusk, Oneida

Award Amount: \$14,000

Project Contact: Dave Kositzke,
sanibelsurf@yahoo.com

Project Purpose

This project will strengthen the apple industry in Wisconsin by returning abandoned apple orchards to commercial production, increasing the value of locally produced product, and creating jobs. Bayfield Apple Company will use the fruit to produce an apple cider based juice that will be sold to local institutions and food cooperatives.

Background

Bayfield Apple Company is a moderate sized grower/producer of apple products located in what was once a strong apple growing region. Several fields adjoining their farm with mature apple trees have been abandoned by their owners for production use. Lack of an economically viable market, labor and capital requirements, expertise,

and small scale, have all contributed to this, with many other small orchards in the area facing the same possible outcome. Bayfield Apple Company plans to build a system that can help supply local markets with apple cider based juice blends.

Project Goals and Objectives

Bayfield Apple Company's primary goal is to develop a market network that will allow them to bring idle farmland back into production. They will restore the tree stock to make additional quality product, which will allow them to expand their customer base to more local schools and institutions as well as grocery markets in the northwest Wisconsin region.

Dane County's Institutional Food Market Coalition

Small Sellers, Big Buyers - Building the Supply and Access to Institutional Markets

Project Duration: January 2010 – November 2011

Counties Impacted: Dane, Jefferson, Dodge, Walworth, and Vernon

Award Amount: \$35,000

Project Contact: Olivia Parry,
parry@co.dane.wi.us

Project Purpose

This project will increase local food sales by sharing best practices for selling to institutions with growers and aggregators, and working with local partners to connect growers, produce distributors, Local Dirt, and institutional buyers in southern Wisconsin.

Background

This project builds on past achievements of the Dane County's Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM) and its many partners. While it is clear that demand is growing for local foods in WI institutions, IFM has discovered that many buyers are still unable to source local produce through their primary vendor, or are unaware of the different sourcing models available. Many new buyers have expressed concerns about stable supply, quantity, and quality. Buyers who have started to source locally, however, eventually come to understand that there is a learning curve, and that it takes more work, but is worth the effort.

Project Goals and Objectives

In response to the barriers identified by institutional markets, IFM plans to do the following:

- 1) Through two Best Practices meetings, IFM will educate individual growers and aggregators about the needs and requirements of institutional buyers, and how to identify, approach, and market to these buyers.
- 2) Based on discussions with distributors, IFM will develop a Grower Readiness Survey and survey growers from the above meeting, identifying 15 to 20 select growers.
- 3) Through a Grower Select meeting, IFM will bring together select growers, distributors, Local Dirt and institutional buyers in the Dane County/Milwaukee corridor to facilitate produce sales.
- 4) IFM will provide technical assistance to growers related to: sales, distribution, production, aggregation, marketing, and business planning.
- 5) Finally, IFM will evaluate meetings, develop "Vendor Profiles" and "Working with Distributors: Important Facts for Growers" materials, track sales to buyers, grower impacts, and circulate information.

Green & Green Distributing

Addressing Distribution Hurdles

for Regional Food System Development

Project Duration: January 2010 – December 2011

Counties Impacted: Crawford, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, and Vernon

Award Amount: \$22,700

Project Contact: Rink Davee,
farmerrink@gmail.com

Project Purpose

Green and Green Distributing will be working with the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and Keewaydin Organics to open a centralized distribution hub in Madison to improve efficiencies for small-scale producers and buyers in Wisconsin.

Background

Green and Green Distributing and Keewaydin Organics both have years of experience in aggregating southwestern Wisconsin farm products and distributing to larger regional markets. Combined, they work with approximately 46 producers, focusing mostly on produce, but also some dairy, and have a steady base of over 45 customers. These businesses face financial hurdles, including staff time, truck purchasing and maintenance, and fuel prices. One method for cutting costs is to improve distribution coordination and efficiency through the use of shared infrastructure.

Project Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this project is to increase sales of Wisconsin produced foods through Green and Green and Kewaydin Organics, while providing a resource that can improve food distribution for other Wisconsin small-scale producers and distributors.

Specifically the group will work to:

- 1) Open a distribution “Hub” in Madison.
 - a. Develop ownership structure of business.
 - b. Locate and rent loading dock in Madison.
 - c. Develop business plan for operating Hub.
- 2) Manage the distribution Hub in Madison.
 - a. Hire a part-time Hub coordinator.
 - b. Develop a system for tracking and recording Hub transactions.
 - c. Implement tracking and recording system.
- 3) Recruit membership to the distribution Hub.
 - a. Develop brochure to promote the Hub.
 - b. Develop a website to promote the Hub.

Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC)

Bridging the Gap - Meeting CSA Demand through Grower Support

Project Duration: January 2010 – June 2011

Counties Impacted: Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Marathon, Rock, Richland, Sauk, Vernon and others as new applicant farms are recruited and trained.

Award Amount: \$35,000

Project Contact: Kiera Mulvey, kiera@macsac.org

Project Purpose

This project will provide Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) grower support to improve farm efficiency and capacity through consultation, training, and resource development to meet market demand and support the specialized needs of CSA growers.

Background

CSA can be a challenging model to adopt for new growers. However, given the growing consumer demand for CSA shares, the success of many local CSA farmers, and the proven profitability of CSA, many direct market growers are

incorporating CSA into their farm marketing plans. The Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC) works with 42 endorsed farms throughout Southern Wisconsin. MACSAC’s current growers have a vast wealth of knowledge and skills that, given adequate staff coordination, would be a significant resource for Wisconsin CSA growers to expand operations and efficiency to increase capacity and availability of CSA shares in our region.

Project Goals & Objectives

The goal of MACSAC’s Bridging the Gap project is to strengthen and grow our regional CSA production and distribution system.

This project will increase the number of CSA shares available to Wisconsin residents, support CSA growers to become more profitable and efficient, and facilitate a collaborative resource and skill sharing network of CSA growers. MACSAC will increase capacity to fulfill the unmet needs of growers requesting information, resources, consultation, and technical advice that come both from our network of growers and from other CSA growers throughout Wisconsin.

Pasture Perfect LLC

Increasing Sales of Pasture-Raised Meat in Northern Wisconsin through Cooperative Marketing

Project Duration: January 2010 – December 2011

Counties Impacted: Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Iron, Sawyer

Award Amount: \$16,000

Project Contact: Melissa Fischbach,
pastureperfectpoultry@gmail.com

Project Purpose

To expand the marketing and sales programs of South Shore Meats, a cooperative venture of meat producers in the Lake Superior counties of Wisconsin.

Background

A handful of meat producers in Ashland and Bayfield County have recently turned to pasture-based production systems and direct marketing to improve the profitability of their enterprises. Each of the producers is selling top-quality meat directly to health-conscious and value-driven consumers and is seeing a steady increase in sales. The climate and precipitation in the Lake Superior counties is ideal for forage production and grazing, and the “Lake Superior” and “Bayfield” brands are increasingly visible local-food brands. As a result, grass-based meat producers in the Lake Superior counties are well-positioned to expand production and sales.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to increase sales of pasture-raised meat produced by farmers in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron County to consumers in Wisconsin and beyond. Specifically, partners in this project will:

- 1) Develop cross-promotional advertising materials to increase sales of meat products directly to consumers in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Sawyer County.
- 2) Increase meat sales to tourists and seasonal residents of Ashland, Bayfield, Cable, and Hayward communities to build regional brand identity.
 - a. Organize, promote, and implement a Bayfield Regional Harvest Trail
 - b. Develop a marketing, sales, and distribution program to increase visibility and availability of South Shore Meat products in retail outlets and resorts in the Ashland, Cable, Bayfield, and Hayward communities.
 - c. Work with the Bayfield Regional Food Producers Association to better understand where tourists and seasonal residents in the Lake Superior region shop when they are at home.

- 3) Develop a business plan for increasing production and sales to consumers within 250 miles of Ashland, WI.



Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program

Technical Assistance for Individual Quick Freeze (IQF)

Vegetable Processing Plant

Project Duration: January 2010 – December 2010

Counties Impacted: Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk

Award Amount: \$15,000

Project Contact: David Vobora,
d.vobora@swcap.org

Project Purpose

Begin development of an IQF vegetable processing plant in southwestern Wisconsin. The presence of this infrastructure will enable local growers to access additional and profitable markets.

Background

California Environmental Associates, working with the Slow Money Institute, recently published a report entitled, “Slow Money Wisconsin.” The report includes these points about vegetable processing in Wisconsin:

- ◆ Few processing options exist at a scale appropriate for small, diversified farms.

- ◆ In 1970 there were 120 canning and freezing plants in Wisconsin. Now there are 34 (six freezing and 28 canning).
- ◆ Processors typically contract with growers who can supply greater than 60 acres.
- ◆ Processing options would offer small-scale farmers a market for their seconds. By some estimates, these farmers leave as much as one-third of their crop in the ground because there is no market for seconds.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to begin development of an IQF processing plant in southwestern Wisconsin. Specifically this project is broken down into three categories:

- 1) Business Case. The business design for using the plant for contract manufacturing needs to be documented. Contract manufacturing means that one farmer or some cooperative group of farmers can hire the IQF plant to produce and/or market their products.
- 2) Implementation. The key task is fundraising. Project management is needed to ensure implementation tasks are coordinated to achieve the project's goals, including assurance that implementation tasks are funded in a timely fashion.
- 3) Support. This includes business management, regulatory compliance, accounting, marketing, and strategic planning support as the IQF plant moves through its first season of operations and plans for its second.

Underground Catering LLC

In-House Artisan Meats

Project Duration: February 2010 – December 2011

Counties Impacted: Colombia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Rock, Sauk

Award Amount: \$25,000

Project Contact: Jonny Hunter,
jonny.d.hunter@gmail.com

Project Purpose

In-House Artisan Meats will help fill Wisconsin's need for more pork products made in the time-honored traditions of charcuterie - the craft of salting, smoking, or curing meats. In-House will do this by exclusively sourcing heritage breeds from Wisconsin farmers who meet their standards for humane animal husbandry.

Background

In-House's buying practices will help address the need for the Wisconsin meat-producing industry to diversify. As the industry has moved toward standardized production and products, there has been less room for the small-scale farmers. The emergence of buyers for free-ranging animals will enable the industry to start to include smaller operations raising a variety of breeds. Furthermore, this project will expand the meat-processing industry's breadth of product and sources of expertise.

Project Goals and Objectives

The main goal of In-House Artisan Meats is to create high quality, freshly cut and cured products from pork raised in Wisconsin for retail and wholesale markets in Wisconsin and the larger Midwest. Objectives necessary to meet this goal include the following:

- 1) Creation of protocol for pork production that meets In-Houses' standards for creating high-quality charcuterie.
- 2) Work with their current network of pork producers to develop contracts for animals, and develop new relationships with other producers.
- 3) Creation of labels and branding that highlight the Wisconsin origin and artisan techniques behind the product.
- 4) Creation of facilities in accordance with safe food handling guidelines that can be expanded for growth, including:
 - a. A processing facility designed for fabricating

- whole hogs.
 - b. A curing facility with necessary climate control.
- 5) Market their products and services to buyers and producers around the state.
 - 6) Begin production of their tested recipes and techniques.

Additionally, In-House Artisan meats will offer independent Wisconsin pork producers the service of creating private artisan labels.

Specifically, In-House will:

- 1) Assist producers in developing methods for raising hogs specifically for charcuterie.
- 2) Craft product lines for producers' direct sale.



University of Wisconsin – Madison, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems

Keeping the Apples Local - Developing Wisconsin Apple Distribution to Wisconsin K-12 Schools

Project Duration: January 2010 – March 2011

Counties Impacted: Statewide

Award Amount: \$20,000

Project Contact: Doug Wubben,
dwubben@wisc.edu

Project Purpose

“Keeping the Apples Local: Developing Wisconsin Apple Distribution to Wisconsin K-12 Schools” will increase the sales of Wisconsin apples to Wisconsin K-12 school districts. In-

creased apple sales will occur indirectly through a regional distributor.

Background

Many school districts are asking how they can get started in local purchasing, but most schools face serious financial and labor constraints which create barriers to purchasing whole, local produce. Purchasing whole apples from local orchards is a logical place to start, given their ease of preparation, likeability among students, and the fact that schools often prefer the smaller apples that orchards have in abundance. However, there still exists barriers for schools that are either too far away from an orchard to receive a delivery or have needs greater than their local orchard can supply.

The two main hurdles this project will address are: 1) distribution, and 2) the perception among school food service directors that purchasing local produce is difficult.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal for this project is to increase sales of Wisconsin apples to Wisconsin K-12 schools and to build support for additional local purchasing in these school communities through promotion of the local apples.

The primary objectives include:

- 1) Increase the number of schools purchasing indirectly from Wisconsin apple orchards.
 - a. Create options for schools to order and receive apples through a regional distributor and promote this option to K-12 schools across the state.
- 2) Facilitate promotion of Wisconsin apples in K-12 schools.
 - a. Create orchard-identified promotional materials for schools.
 - b. Create promotional events with schools highlighting their program to the media.

- 3) Promote Wisconsin apples to Wisconsin schools opportunity to schools and orchards
 - a. Create two brief (3-5 minute) videos demonstrating how the process works.
 - b. Promote the videos through press releases, website, and presentations.

Vernon Economic Development Association

Western Wisconsin Local Foods Initiative

Project Duration: January 2010 – December 2011

Counties Impacted: La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon, Crawford and Richland

Award Amount: \$40,000

Project Contact: Sue Noble, snoble@veda-wi.org

Project Purpose

Develop the Western Wisconsin Local Foods Initiative to coordinate a cooperative of producers, processors, and institutions that will increase access to markets by establishing critical infrastructure to overcome production, processing, marketing, and distribution hurdles facing local food producers.

Background

There is a lack of structured coordination between producers, processors, and purchasers that creates a barrier to selling and purchasing local food in western Wisconsin. Research informs the group that consumers play an integral role in the health of a local food system. According to a rural economic food system report produced by economist Ken Meter, consumers in western Wisconsin spend \$208 million annually buying food from outside the region. If the region's consumers were to purchase 25% of their food directly from farmers, it would produce \$33 million of new farm income each year.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goals of the Western Local Foods Initia-



tive are: 1) To increase the purchase of locally grown or produced food products by creating the infrastructure and structured coordination necessary to utilize local institutional markets; and 2) To increase institution, producer, and processor knowledge, skills, and understanding of the details of buying and selling locally.

The primary objectives include:

- 1) Establish “buyer-seller” relationships and a “supply and demand” tracking system that will facilitate an increase in the purchase of local food by a minimum of 3% for medium-scale institutions and 10% for large-scale institutions.
- 2) Develop a multi-stakeholder cooperative consisting initially of five local producers, three large producer groups, four processors, and six institutions to market, sell, and distribute fresh and value-added food products.
- 3) Leverage the Vernon Economic Development Association's new food processing, storage, and distribution facility located in Viroqua, Wisconsin that will provide the infrastructure necessary for local producers to process, store, and distribute fresh and value-added food products.
- 4) Conduct six workshops and trainings regarding institutional food purchasing topics, including post-harvest handling best management practices, and food safety regulations.

Additional Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program Activities 2008-2009

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program provides the necessary foundation for building Wisconsin's local food capacity. The program has provided the resources and inspiration for developing several DATCP programs that further extend Wisconsin's local food impacts.

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Workshop Road Shows

Building off the February 2009 Buy Local Regional Workshops, created by the University of Wisconsin – Extension, the 2009-10 “Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Workshop Road Show” was implemented. This workshop series provided farms with the necessary tools to take advantage of local and regional markets. The program offered nine different day-long, educational workshops focusing on areas such as holistic management, post-harvest handling, food safety, and accounting management. The workshops drew over 250 attendees to the nine regional sessions during Winter 2009-10. Workshop evaluations showed program success with 100% of attendees reporting that they learned something new, 97% reporting that they were likely to change a farming practice, and 71% of attendees reporting that “workshops” is a service they would like the BLBW program to provide in the future.

Farm-to-School Statewide Efforts

In partnership with the Department of Health Services; the Department of Public Instruction; the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems; the Research, Education, Action, and Policy on Food Group (REAP); and many local organizations, DATCP created local and statewide farm-to-school programs. Through this robust, far-



reaching partnership, a statewide AmeriCorps Farm-to-School effort was developed.

Started in 2008, the AmeriCorps Farm-to-School program created an innovative approach to decreasing childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating habits in K-12 students and increasing access to local foods in schools statewide. The program offers support in identifying and procuring local foods while concurrently providing a nutritional curriculum that incorporates school gardens, classroom food tasting demonstrations, and farm field trips.

Seeing the impacts of farm-to-school programs and the limited program funding, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed Farm-to-School Act

293 in May 2010. Through this act, DATCP will house a farm-to-school program manager to help further the positive impacts of local farm-to-school programs. Activities will include: connecting schools with nearby farms to provide children with locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and other nutritious foods in school breakfasts, lunches, and snacks; helping children develop healthy eating habits; providing nutritional and agricultural education; and improving farmers' incomes and direct access to markets.

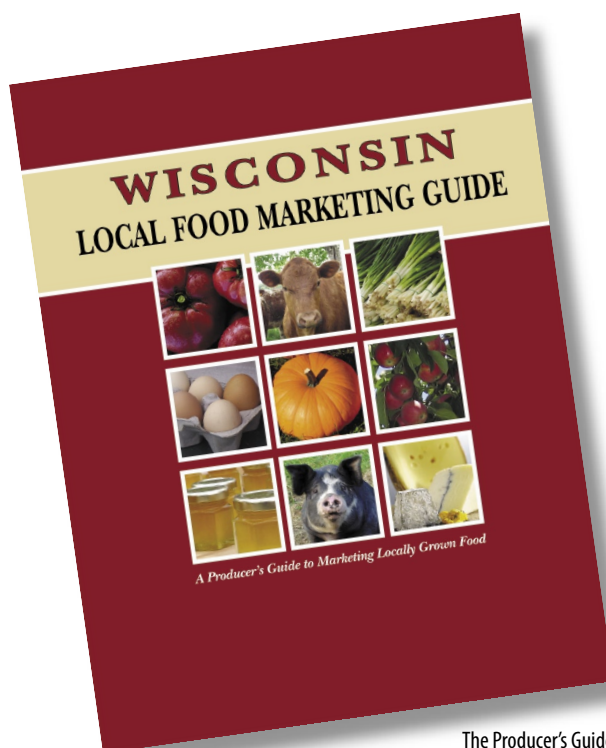
Producers First

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant does an excellent job of providing funding to organizations working on broad-scale or regional efforts, positively impacting numerous buyers and sellers. Through this grant program, it became clear that many individual local food producers also need assistance. To meet this need, DATCP's Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin team launched Producers First.

Producers First provides funding for Wisconsin local food producers to work with consultants who can provide one-on-one technical assistance to help them increase profitability and sales in Wisconsin markets. This assistance may address issues such as market development, packaging and label design, food safety issues, whole farm and business planning, accounting systems, and cooperative development.

Wisconsin Local Food Marketing Guide

In 2008, DATCP's Market Wisconsin team created a 120-page, step-by-step guide for producers seeking to enter local food markets. The guide offers tips on everything from direct and wholesale marketing to licensing and regulations, to business planning and label development. Because of the book's content, overall design, and timeliness of the information, the publica-



The Producer's Guide
is available in hard copy and online.
Go to www.datcp.state.wi.us
and search "buy local"

tion received the 2008 Wisconsin Distinguished Document Award, administered by the Wisconsin Library Association Government Roundtable.

Wisconsin Food Safety Assessment for Fruits & Vegetables

Food safety concerns have been rising in the fruit and vegetable industry. Both large commercial producers and small diversified producers are affected. However, the needs of these two scales of producers differ. To address these issues, DATCP has contracted with FamilyFarmed.org to create a new program to enhance the competitiveness of fruits and vegetables in Wisconsin. By assessing the food safety needs of fresh fruit and vegetable growers and buyers, the team will develop best practices to meet the needs identified. New resources from this effort are expected in Fall 2010.

Additional Wisconsin Marketing Program Activities 2008-2009



Grocers Buy Local

DATCP partnered with the Wisconsin Grocers Association to create the Grocers Buy Local website (www.grocersbuylocal.com). The site provides a list of Wisconsin grocers interested in purchasing locally produced foods and beverages. Grocers Buy Local was developed in an effort to help local sellers identify new grocery markets for their products.



SavorWisconsin.com

The SavorWisconsin.com website is connecting consumers with Wisconsin producers, farms, restaurants, farmers' markets, and food-related events. This online directory helps consumers locate foods and products across Wisconsin, allowing visitors to customize their search by company, product, location, and much more. With over 40,000 monthly visitors, www.SavorWisconsin.com is home to over

1,650 producer profiles, local food retailers, and restaurants, the largest listing of farmers' markets, and features the breadth of Wisconsin agriculture products. Listing businesses and events, and creating producer profiles are free to Wisconsinites. The SavorWisconsin.com project started in late 2002 and has been guided by three entities - DATCP, UW-Extension, and the Wisconsin Apple Growers Association.



Something Special from Wisconsin™

The Something Special from Wisconsin™ (SS/W™) is a branded marketing program administered by DATCP. The SS/W™ logo provides a quick, reliable way for shoppers to identify Wisconsin products at grocery stores, retail outlets, farmers' markets, and restaurants throughout the state. SS/W™ products use Wisconsin ingredients, production, or processing activities.

In 2009, a new website (www.somethingspecialwi.com) was launched to feature SS/W™ members. The site received nearly 120,000 hits in the first quarter alone. Membership has grown to its highest level since inception, increasing by nearly 50% over the previous year. Much of this success can be attributed to the promotional efforts and partnerships with the Wisconsin Grocers Association, Thrive, and UW-Extension.

Additional information about all of these programs can be found online at www.datcp.state.wi.us.

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Division of Agricultural Development

**Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program
2008/2009 Annual Impact Report**

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